



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0482GA-1 for Rockdale County Public Schools

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant (Rockland County Public Schools (RCPS)) has set forth a strong comprehensive and coherent reform vision, based on the RCPS's Strategic Plan that was formulated with multiple stakeholders in the community. Its PLACES (Personalized Learning Assures College/Career Empowerment for Students) framework utilizes a comprehensive multi-prong approach, including specialty magnet schools and academies, school choice, increased college and career readiness; personalized Learning Portfolios; digital learning resources in all classrooms; partnerships with local colleges, and on-line learning opportunities for students and staff.</p> <p>The applicant has a clear articulation of the key elements of the student centered educational approach that is core to its PLACES model. The personalization of student learning is highly evident in its reform vision and approach.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's approach to implementation fully supports a high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation of the proposed project. This is a system-wide model involving all schools within the LEA, and thus involves 22 different schools (11 Elementary; 4 middle schools; 3 high schools, and 4 academies), involving 691 educators and close to 16,000 students, all of whom are deemed high need, and roughly 2/3's low income. The applicant did not specify a process which was used that determined how all schools should be ones that participate in the program.</p> <p>The applicant provides a full list of all schools that will participate, along with total numbers of participating students, participating students from low-income families, participating students who are high-need, and participating educators. Of special note, the four existing academies have successfully attracted and serve a low-income population (making up anywhere from 48% to 78% of the school's total student population.) Thus, the approach is highly inclusive and addresses well the low-income and high-need target population.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The PLACES model offers a multi-faceted, coherent approach to personalizing student learning, involving seven different key elements of student-centered education (flexible learning; redefinition of teacher roles; project-based applied learning; student-designed and -driven learning paths; boundary-free school system; mastery/competency-based progression; P-12 continuum of learning; and robust use of technology)</p> <p>The model nicely builds on prior work in the LEA, such as some of its work with its Rockdale Career Academy and other specialty schools, its piloting of a full-service curriculum management software system for teachers as well as parents, and the fact that Rockdale Public Schools is the only district in Georgia that utilizes standards-based mastery grading and reporting at all grade levels.</p> <p>There was fairly limited discussion of how technology would be used by students, other than for assessment. The approach also seemed primarily "content-driven" (with reference to "pushing digital instructional content to students"), and did not specifically discuss how technology could be used to promote critical thinking, higher level thinking skills, or relate to future careers.</p> <p>Since the applicant plans to involve all schools and all students in the district as participants, they have appropriately not needed to address how the effort needs to be scaled up.</p>		

Regarding required elements needed for a high quality plan, the applicant generally provided sufficient information re: the goals, activities in the proposal narrative itself, while timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties were, in general, satisfactorily addressed in the budget section of the proposal.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)

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8

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has proposed a sufficiently ambitious yet achievable set of annual goals.

a) The applicant has set forth ambitious yet achievable goals targeted by a reasonable set of three assessments (9<sup>th</sup> grade Math I End of Course Test, High School Biology End of Course Test; and "all subjects" on state CRCT by the end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade.)

b) The applicant has indicated sufficiently ambitious yet achievable set of goals for decreasing achievement gaps, targeted by a set of two assessments (high school math End of Course Test, High School Biology End of Course Test). They appropriately have selected two areas for which the greatest gaps currently exist. For all pairs of groups, they have established sufficiently ambitious goals of narrowing group differences in achievement to 3-10 percentage points.

c) The applicant has generally proposed sufficiently ambitious yet achievable goals for increasing graduation rates. It is unclear, however, what the rationale is for having 2012-13 targets that are slightly lower than the 2010-11 baseline performance for several of the groups (black; economically disadvantages), and for the very ambitious target of a dramatic increase in the graduation rate of students with disabilities (18% to 35.7%)

d) It appears that the college enrollment data received from Advance may include some inaccuracies, in that the overall college enrollment rate of 48% is much higher than all the subgroups presented. Thus, it is difficult to critically assess the target percentages presented in the table.

## B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	13
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>RCPS has demonstrated a clear track record of success in a number of different areas, including being removed from the "Needs Improvement list" and making AYP for 6 consecutive years, having high levels of proficiency in reading and writing for grades 3-8, and in high school graduation rates which were 82% in 2010-11, which they attribute to the expansion of non-traditional, personalized learning approaches at the high school level, such as with the Rockdale Career Academy which was opened in 2006 and serves 1800 students. Descriptions are also provided of the Virtual Campus. The offerings and specific approach of the Open Campus, however, are not clearly defined. The applicant does not provide information of past record of success concerning college enrollment data.</p> <p>The applicant has a good history of utilizing a system of data-driven instructional decision-making the past decade, coupled with allowances in the elementary schools' and middle schools' class master schedules for flexible groupings and remediation/acceleration and enrichment interventions, and FLEX period in high schools. Student assessments are well-varied, and include not only standardized tests, but portfolios that can encompass performances and products. Such reform in assessment and instructional decision making is also optimized by attention to changes in the teacher evaluation system focusing on student achievement that have already been piloted in the district.</p> <p>The applicant describes a data warehousing system that has been place during the 2011-12 year that is accessible to educators, parents and students. While they provide a brief description of the features and capabilities of the system, it is not clear how much this system has actually been accessed by educators, parents or students.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

There seems to be good transparency and public access of actual personnel salaries through the RCPS website, the Teach

Georgia website, and through the Governor's Office of Student Achievement websites.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)

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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has good State legal, statutory and regulatory systems in place to support district autonomy and students' personalized learning. These include the LEA's authority to establish and approve charter petitions, school choice at each level, a renewed strategic plan supportive of personalized learning, and the state's new proposed graduation rule that is more competence and mastery-based. The proposal also describes a number of educational initiatives occurring in the middle school and elementary school levels, providing evidence of school choice options already being promoted in the system.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)

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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's proposal is well-grounded in the district's strategic plan, and was recently approved by a variety of community stakeholders, including district teachers and administrators, Board members, business partners, faith-based community members and other community partners. The renewal team approved all 6 strategies that make up the PLACES model.

There was not, however, information provided regarding clear, specific involvement of students, families, teachers and principals in the development of the proposal, or whether they had potential input into the proposal.

Letters of support were provided from a wide range of stakeholders, including state and local politicians, judges, professional commissions, business groups, higher education, and non-profit community groups.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)

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3

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a satisfactory account of the current status of their work towards personalization of learning, and the extent to which the proposed plan will extend the current capabilities regarding student information technology, and specialized programs. Guided by the RCPS renewed strategic plan and its six overarching strategies which will drive district and school initiatives over the next 5 years, the strategies resonate with many of the priorities of the RTT-D grant initiative.

The applicant has laid out a strong set of action steps that are part of the planned initiative, and articulates gaps in some areas between the current status of the district and needed additional actions. The applicant does not provide information as to a specific analytic process or plan they used to determine these needs and gaps, or ways such a plan could potentially be applied to other areas, or future implementation plans to analyze needs and gaps.

## C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	17
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
Overall, the applicant has put forth a good high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching to personalize the learning process for students.		
(i , ii and iii) RCPS has put in place a comprehensive advisement system called PREPARE to help students understand what they are learning is key to their success in accomplishing their goals, and linked to future college- and career plans, at both the high school and middle school levels. Elementary school counselors also are implementing career-oriented lessons and career fairs. The state's BRIDGE Act, signed into law in May 2010 as well as the 8 <sup>th</sup> graders' Individual Graduation Plans, also supports this career awareness work.		
Opportunities for "deep learning" are provided through their Dual Enrollment/Dual Credit courses that provide opportunities for		

11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders to take college-level courses in partnership with a number of Georgia's colleges, and through the AVID, a structured college preparatory system that provides academic and social support for underachieving students in grades k-12. RCPS recognizes the current limitations of their high schools' career centers, and wish to bolster those capabilities.

Career and personalized learning plans appear to take good advantage of the district's student data (gained through 8<sup>th</sup> grade EXPLORE), 10<sup>th</sup> grade PLAN, and the PSAT), and a process of student-led conferences, involving students, parents and staff advisors and parent-oriented sessions and events.

There was fairly limited discussion of how students actually identify and pursue learning and development goals linked to college and careers – and how they structure their learning to achieve those goals.

(iv and v) The district describes cultural diversity training for staff as the main strategy to address access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts and perspectives, with little discussion on ways in which curricula and other educational programs and events designed for students might directly address this. There was also fairly limited discussion on mastering critical academic content and developing skills and traits such as goal-setting, teamwork, perseverance, and critical thinking.

(b-i and b- ivb) RCPS sees as key to students' future success the importance of eliminating the literacy gap, and proposes to do so through the Rockdale Early Learning Initiative targeting at-risk families with a "strengths-based, literacy-rich pipeline of services" through active family engagement. This initiative is one of the few in the state that allows the collection of longitudinal cohort data of participating students from birth through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and beyond.

Primary examples of the ways in which the district is promoting personalized learning are the technologically-oriented Rockdale Career Academy and the RCPS Career, Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE) department for high schools and middle schools, and the Georgia Piedmont Technical College. The creation of Personalized Learning Portfolios is also proposed as a major strategy to promote and assess personalized academic and social growth.

(b-iv-a) A discussion of frequently updated individual student data primarily pertains to a description of the district's good technological infrastructure to provide feedback to schools and the district (including disaggregated subgroup performance for each college and career ready indicator). There was limited discussion of how teachers would use this updated data to provide particular guidance to individual students in their classrooms, to provide more responsive instructional decisions or support for individual students under their care.

(v) The applicant describes a good system of multi-dimensional curriculum options that can be personalized by reading levels, interaction and other preferences, that can draw upon assessment data such as individual students' reading skills to help differentiate instruction. The new plan proposes the need for a College and Career Readiness Coordinator position, to oversee a strong and diverse range of college and career-ready initiatives K-12.

(b-ii) The applicant has outlined an excellent range and variety of high quality instructional approaches and environments for students, including attention to areas beyond simply traditional academic areas, such as promoting risk-taking, promoting emotional intelligence through coping skills to reduce stress, and teaching of attention, memory and process skills. The district's move toward proficiency-based approaches towards coursework and graduation requirements importantly bolsters these more expansive and personalized approach.

(b-iii) Regarding high quality content, the applicant describes an ambitious plan for expanding the use of technology beyond the current Rockdale Virtual Campus, and have digital learning resources available in all K-12 classrooms, as well as for staff professional development of educators. RCPS graduation requirements will be modified to include an on-line learning experience for all high school students, although the nature of the rationale nor criteria used for thoughtfully selecting what such on-line learning experiences might entail is not specified in the proposal. The applicant also proposes the use of personal technology devices, but does not sufficiently outline the educational advantages of such personal devices, nor how to ensure equitable access if students do not own such devices or have the technical capability to access the recommended apps, etc.

(c) There appeared to be no discussion of mechanisms in place to provide training and support to students to ensure how they will use the tools and resources provided to them.

The applicant provided sufficient information, in general, on the goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties (required elements needed for a high quality plan) in the proposal narrative and budget section.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)

20

16

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Overall, the applicant has set forth a reasonably good high quality plan regarding Teaching and Leading by personalizing the learning environment.

(C2-a-i) The applicant recognizes the fundamental shift needed in the ways that many teachers teach, and a shift to a more facilitator role in the classroom. They have outlined a good range of targeted ongoing professional learning, much through on-line options, as well as through a diverse mentor pool. Training and time for collaborative work during the school day is set aside to address a number of new initiatives in the district, including the use of more digital technologies for learning, service learning, partnerships with local colleges to adapt instruction, and global education. Sufficient allowances for training, resources, professional learning days, weekly and monthly meetings seem to be provided.

(ii) The applicant features digital learning resources as a major centerpiece of providing content and instruction. While they state that teachers and staff will receive professional development on using technology in the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, there is little description of the ways in which technology will be used, and there is an implied sense of teachers as users or consumers of the technology, rather than thoughtful inform decision-makers around how technology might be appropriately utilized by the students under their charge.

(iii) There appeared to be no specific discussion in this section concerning how educator capacity would be addressed to frequently measure student progress towards meeting standards, or using data to inform acceleration of student progress and improve practice of educators

(iv) The applicant presented a solid description of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness Systems (TKES) and Leader Keys Effectiveness Systems (LKES) developed through Georgia's Race to the Top, and how it was piloted last year and fully implemented by the end of 2012-13. The system appropriately takes into account observations and other measures of teacher performance standards, student growth and academic achievement, and student perceptions. Much of the system is described as being on-line, which should significantly help with the ease and consistent implementation of the system. The applicant describes a solid evaluation system in place for teacher and principal evaluation methods.

(b-i) Regarding actionable information to help educators identify optimal learning approaches, the applicant describes focusing on the "analysis of cognitive levels of all students", with no further description of what they mean by "cognitive levels" or analysis of what that would entail. Similarly, statements are made about providing training and ways for staff to have the background and skills to work with students from all cultural backgrounds and family structures, with no further description of what that would entail.

(b-ii) Regarding high quality resources and tools, the applicant provides primarily a general description of some communication tools, and of some professional development offerings and evaluation regarding technology. Quite limited detail is offered on what high quality resources and tools would entail.

(b-iii) Regarding processes and tools to match student needs with specific resources and approaches to provide continuously improving feedback about the effectiveness of the resources in meeting student needs, the applicant describe a wide variety of strategies, including content coaches at every school and core content area, incentives for coaches whose schools make measurable gains in targeted areas, and instructional and mentoring framework for aspiring leaders. It is unclear exactly how this professional development will help teachers actually match student needs with specific resources and approaches.

(c-i) Regarding teacher evaluation systems for the purpose of continuous improvement, the applicant refers to the use of the LKES, and how it will be used to evaluate assistant principals beginning the 2013-14. Little additional documentation is provided regarding the eight performance standards that will be used, other than reference to their four domains. A fifth domain of Governance and Leadership will be assessed using such methods as a faculty and staff climate survey. No description is provided as to what qualities and practices the applicants believes is part of optimal leadership.

(c- ii) Regarding training, systems, and practices to continuously improve school progress, the applicant describes several different strategies which they have in place: a CRPS Cycle for Results that uses a proficiency model of learning at all schools; and a self-assessment for school leaders called the Leader Assessment of Performance Standard (LAPS), which leaders use to create two SMART goals, one of which must relate to the school's improvement plan. Starting in 2012, they have also put into place a well-designed Leader Induction Plan to provide special support for first-year principals.

(d) RCPS has in place a satisfactory number of elements to increase the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers, including the offering of courses, reimbursement for applicable testing fees, scholarships for graduate study, and partnerships to involve professors and other content specialists to be involved in the development of the district professional development plans.

Required elements of a high quality plan were, in general, sufficiently addressed in the proposal narrative and in the budget section.

## D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	15
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: <p>(d-ia) The district has a lean central office, with a superintendent and 6 cabinet members each heading up a clearly differentiated set of areas, tasks and personnel. New tasks and initiatives that would result from the proposed grant would be assigned to the appropriate cabinet member and department as logical extensions of their current work.</p> <p>(d-ib) The RCPS has a number of structural features and practices already in place that ensures clear and sufficient autonomy, such as a building leadership team at each school; the ability to determine multiple elements of its own school schedule and calendar; decision-making over its budget, and personnel interview process. Evidence of this support of innovation at the school building level is evidenced by the number of grassroots initiatives that resulted in the formation by a number of specialized programs and academies, some of which were the first or largest of its kind in the state.</p> <p>(d-ic) The RCPS is well-positioned to give students the opportunity to progress and earn credits based on mastery, as the only district in Georgia that currently uses standards-based mastery grading and reporting at all levels, including high school.</p> <p>(d-id) RCPS has a system in place to enable students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways (e.g., mastery test, performance task, part of class activity.)</p> <p>(d-ie) RCPS describes a sound approach for providing resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English learners.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	9
(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: <p>(d-2a) The district has already made a significant investment in technology, as evidenced by all classrooms in every school being 21<sup>st</sup> Century Classrooms that are digitally equipped; multiple computer labs in each school, and each teacher having between 3-5 computers in his/her classroom and a laptop with wireless capability. The district also has a full service curriculum management system integrated with their assessment system, response to intervention system, and a parent portal. They will be building on several successful efforts already in place, including the Rockdale Virtual campus; the Ask the Expert program, and a 1:1 computer to student approach with digital pads, and establishing after-hour centers with computers and free hot spots for wireless connections in downtown.</p> <p>(d-2b) The applicant has a small number of designated staff in each school and in the district office to offer technical support to teachers, staff, students and parents. The staffing numbers look sufficient for supporting teachers, but may be overtaxed to fully serve parents and students as well. With the exception of tech-oriented students interning from the Rockdale Career Academy, technical support looks largely in the form of help desk-type on-line response, which is likely not a sufficient level and form of response for parents and students needing assistance, given the widespread emphasis on technology in the grant initiative.</p> <p>(d-2c) The RCPS has in place an important parent portal that gives parents access to student data and information in open-source language that is exportable. The work has been appropriately organized into three phases, each of which expands the type and nature of information that will be available to parents.</p> <p>(D) – The RCPS has interoperable data systems between the LEA and schools that already allows staff to pull up student data and information. This work builds on foundational work already accomplished through Georgia's RTT State grant.</p>		

## E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	13
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: <p>The RCPS appears to have a strong continuous improvement process in place, guided by their pre-existing, renewed 5-year</p>		

strategic plan, and their 6-step RCPS cycle of results framework. They also have articulated well the need to invest in the longitudinal data system and the educators who will be using it, including the importance of involvement and buy-in by teachers and administrators, and creating “data mentors and coaches” at the school level, rather than simply utilizing a top-down approach. They do not, however, indicate a plan of how they would make that information on the quality of investments available to the public.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)

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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The RCPS has strong communications strategies in place, to support communication with external and internal stakeholders. For external stakeholders, these include good relations with media outlets, the Superintendent's Action Council, the district website and eBOARD, Parent Advisory Group and Parent Academy, and work with the Chamber of Commerce. For internal stakeholders, these include the district e-newsletter, and multiple meetings held on a regular basis with teachers, principals and others. They also cite several different ways in which students are engaged in communication, including student-led conferences, student leadership opportunities, and ability to choose their program of study according to their interests and needs.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)

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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The RCPS has set forth an appropriately ambitious yet achievable set of performance measures. Measures are well-conceptualized, and organized into age-appropriate grade bands of K-3; 6-8, and 9-12. They have proposed an appropriate set of required and applicant-proposed measures for each grade band. Grade level targets are appropriately set, and laudably is equitable across all sub-groups of students.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)

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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The RCPS describes a strong evaluation plan set forth by an external evaluator. The quasi-experimental research design will enable a summative assessment of the program's impact on educational outcomes. An important element of the evaluation is an inclusion of a process evaluation component that will allow closer scrutiny of the actual program intervention, and the degree to which it was implemented as envisioned within and across district schools. The evaluation also laudably plans to produce a written report for each school, which will be especially valuable to the schools.

## F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	9
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant has provided a comprehensive, sufficiently detailed project budget for its total 4-year budget of \$54,889,394.98 and its requested total grant funds of \$29,942,551.98. The applicant is to be commended for including in the budget a significant sum (close to \$25 million) of funds from other sources to support the project, in Year 1. Staffing assignments and costs for district personnel seem sound and appropriate. Regarding contractual services, the pricing of the evaluation work (\$60k/year on average) may be low for the highly ambitious evaluation that is described, while the cost of the school choice consultant (\$250k for Year 1, and \$100k for Years 2 and 3) looks somewhat high.</p> <p>The budget provided is accompanied by a thoughtful rationale for investments and priorities.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	8

## (F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant lays out a reasonable plan for how they intend to utilize collaborative partnerships, staff and community leaders to seek additional support from local and outside funders. They describe a set of actions, targets, and protocols that they plan to follow to solicit future funding, and some potential actions take on by the Rockdale County Public Schools, and the project's Advisory Board. They do not include very much specific information regarding budget assumptions, potential sources or budget for the three years after the term of the grant.

## Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	8

## Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

Overall, the applicant has set forth a reasonably strong initiative with public and private partnerships to address the social, emotional and behavioral needs of students.

- 1) The applicant describes an appropriate initiative that builds upon two coherent and sustainable partnerships that have emerged from past work in the district: STARS (the Support Team for All Rockdale Students) Community Partnership, a comprehensive programs to address the social, emotional and behavioral needs of students (part of the federal Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant) and the Rockdale Early Learning Initiative (RELI)/Parents as Teachers (PAT).
- 2) It lays out 7 appropriate population-level desired results that align with and support the applicant's broader TT-D proposal, focusing on safe and supportive school climates through positive behavior, social and emotional supports, reducing student risk and exposure to alcohol and marijuana, and increased participation in community service and leadership activities.
- 3) They have set forth a good evaluation plan to track the selected indicators concerning students' well-being. While they state that they have concentrated primarily on gathering baseline data, they do also outline plans to conduct three different evaluation components consisting of process evaluation, outcome evaluation and informal feedback. The applicant refers to the RCPS Cycle for Results framework as the method by which they would use data to target its resources, but does not elaborate more specifically. Their response to scaling the model is mainly addressed by increased staffing to the Early Learning Center.
- 4) In the proposal narrative, there is fairly limited discussion on how the partnership would, within participating schools, specifically integrate education and other services for participating students, other than a description of how the STARS project has worked to date, and a general description of the Early Learning Center approach to date. Further information, however, is provided in the budget section.
- 5) They describe reasonable plans for providing staff training on a variety of important topics, provide good level of detail on background information and data on each of the seven specific areas they propose to target through this competitive priority initiative, and good track record of pre-existing infrastructure to select, implement and evaluate supports, and support improved results. They have outlined a number of strategies (e.g., Advisory Council, Parent Academy, Parent Leadership Institute, Parent Café) to elicit parent input.
- 6) They have defined a strong set of performance measures, aligned to their target goals.

## Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

## Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:



The applicant (Rockland County Public Schools (RCPS)) has set forth a strong comprehensive and coherent reform vision to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies, tools and supports for students and educators that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards and graduation requirements. Its PLACES (Personalized Learning Assures College/Career Empowerment for Students) framework utilizes a multi-faceted approach to personalizing student learning, involving seven different key elements of student-centered education. These elements include flexible learning, redefinition of teacher roles, project-based applied learning, student-designed and –driven learning paths, boundary-free school system, mastery/competency-based progression, P-12 continuum of learning; and robust use of technology. The applicant recognizes the fundamental shift needed in the ways that many teachers teach, and a shift to a more facilitator role in the classroom. They have outlined a good range of targeted ongoing professional learning, much through on-line options, as well as through a diverse mentor pool.

Total	210	184
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## Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	13

### Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

The RCPS has requested additional funding for the "Public Safety Academy at Rockdale Career Academy, a career and technical education program focused on public safety." The purpose of this grant application is to provide educational opportunities to at-risk students that will improve the students' educational experience by facilitating buy-in, increasing the scope of dual enrollment opportunities and providing hands-on training focused on hard to measure skills. It is requesting \$1,740,034.99 to cover the cost of purchasing equipment (e.g., emergency medical services and fire fighting apparatus) and supplies. Personnel (2 FT instructors) and travel would be covered by state and local funds.

They have proposed an interesting and appropriate set of measurable objectives, such as 80% of PSA students meeting cut scores on state approved end of Pathway Test or the Firefighter 1 certification exam, and cut scores on scenario based activities that test hard to measure skills such as goal-setting, team work, perseverance, critical thinking, and problem solving including search and rescue, disaster response, emergency planning and fire safety.

Given the expense of this to-be-purchased equipment, it would have been helpful to have had more information on what the district already possesses for this Public Safety Academy, and what students are already able to use and do in the Academy. The project does appear to be sustainable, given that the personnel costs and travel are covered by state and local funds.

Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	9
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### Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

The Rockdale Career Academy has proposed a program called the Roadtrip Nation via RV Renovation. It builds on an existing national organization and curriculum based on an existing public television document series, that is designed "to help students more effectively engage with their futures and view education as relevant and important in their lives." By using a vast archive of interviews conducted by students participating in the Roadtrip Nation programs, youth build their own Roadtrip Projects modeled after videos they watch in the archive. The proposed project would involve one teacher, who would assist with the creation and coordination of over 100 student Roadtrip experiences per year.

The requested grant funds are \$1,713,429.72. \$300,000 would cover the salary of one instructor over the 4 years, while \$1,010,000 is requested for travel (\$250 budget for 100 students per year, for 4 years).

The feasibility of this one instructor handling 100 student trips per year would have been better to be able to be gauged if the proposal had included information on how long these student trips might last (are they part of a day, a full day, or a multi-day trip), whether these trips would be individual, paired, and/or small groups, and how far the students would travel for these trips (maximum distance, mile radius covered). It is also not clear whether this is a "full time" student experience, or if this is coupled with other classes and courses that students would be taking at their local high school or at the RCA. There were also no measurable outcomes that were included as part of this proposed initiative.

It is also not clear how sustainable such an initiative would be, in years beyond the grant funding period, given that the full-time instructor staffing costs are fully covered by the grant.

Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	10
<p>Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Rockdale County schools has proposed Project SUCCESS (Schools Using Collaborative Counseling Efforts to Support Schools.) It would work as part of the STARS Program (Support Team for All Rockdale Students), a community partnership funded by the Safe Schools/Health Students grant initiative. It focuses on personalizing support services, as a complement to personalizing teaching and learning. One of the major negative factors impacting students is transiency, and the current transiency rate for the school system is 33%. This effort targets four elementary schools that feed into the county's most at-risk middle and high school.</p> <p>Counselors would work directly with students and teachers to build a school's climate conducive to reinforcing students' positive behaviors and resiliency skills, through classroom and school-wide activities, and consulting regularly with teachers.</p> <p>The requested budget of \$1,988,804 would be put largely towards personnel: hiring four elementary school counselors (one for each targeted elementary school), one prevention and intervention specialist (to serve the middle and high schools), one school social worker to serve the targeted schools, and contracting one mental health therapist to serve the targeted schools. The work would be managed by a core management team that draws from the STARS Advisory Council.</p> <p>The program appears reasonably well-designed, focused, and well-staffed, with appropriate budgets. It would have been helpful to have included what current budgets and resources are already available at in the district by way of counseling services and support, and to distinguish what is being asked in this supplement that is different from other requests for counseling services that are part of either the regular proposal of this grant, or the competitive priority part of the grant proposal. This proposal also does not include any sort of measurable outcomes that would be tracked. It is not clear how this proposed initiative would be sustainable, beyond the grant period.</p>		



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0482GA-2 for Rockdale County Public Schools

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Rockdale County Public Schools clearly articulates a comprehensive reform model that encompasses the four core academic areas. The district proposes a complete transformation of the curriculum, instruction, and schedule for students. This vision is articulated in the district's five year strategic plan. For example, RCPS identified Personalized Learning Assures College/Career Empowerment for Students (PLACE) framework serves as the foundation to accomplish the districtwide focus on customized learning. Likewise, the district's emphasis on magnet schools and academies, personalized learning portfolios, technology, college partnerships, and online learning opportunities ensures that the focus will be on the four educational core areas.</p> <p>Overall, this places RCPS in the upper high range.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Rockdale County Public Schools' approach to implementation includes both the LEA and the district as evidenced by the involvement of all schools in the district. However, the process for selection of schools is not described in detail in the proposal. A list of all participating schools is included. This list also clearly identifies specific student groups by high needs</p>		

and low-income populations.

Overall, this places RCPS in the middle range.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)

10

10

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Rockdale County Public Schools' reform proposal targets personalized learning for all students in the district with the goal of having a significant impact on improving student outcomes. Through the PLACES model, all schools will offer flexible learning opportunities, refined teacher roles and training, student designed and driven learning paths, mastery and competency-based assessments, continuum of learning through programs of study, use of technology and college and career preparedness for students as part of a unique blend of strategies and activities designed to promote a personalized learning environment. Through the PLACES model, each student benefits from a complete cycle of teacher, student and parent participation, and interaction in activities from grade 3 through the end of the high school years. Thus, RCPS demonstrates this level of support to all schools through the participation in PLACES. Therefore, it is highly likely that this plan will result in meaningful reform throughout the district.

Overall, this places RCPS in the upper high range.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)

10

8

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Rockdale County Public Schools notes goals that are ambitious by targeting improved student learning through incremental growth on assessments. For example, RCPS proposes growth on end of course assessments and statewide assessments of approximately 20 % by the end of the grant period. Likewise, the district expects to narrow student achievement gaps by 5% each year by the end of the grant period. Similarly, goals for increasing the graduation rate are from 66% to 81% after the grant period ends. However, the 66% appears to conflict with the 86% graduation rate reported in another section of the proposal. Also, the district proposes to increase college enrollment rates from 48% to 60%. Since RCPS has a track record of increasing achievement and with the full implementation of the PLACES model and student individualized plans, these goals should be achievable.

Overall, this places RCPS in the low high range.

## B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	12
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Rockdale County Public Schools reports a clear record of success over the past decade. Moreover, the district reports growth in the past four years as a result of new leadership. For example, RCPS was originally identified as a district in need of improvement. However, after a two year period, the district was removed from the list of districts identified as in need of improvement. Additionally, the district made AYP for six consecutive years and continues to close student achievement gaps. For example, student achievement gaps narrowed in recent years in the areas of reading for elementary students. In 2008-2009, all students scored at 94% compared to 95% in 2011-2012. Likewise, in 2008-2009, minority students scored at 92% compared to 94% in 2011-2012. This clearly indicates a narrowed margin in achievement performance.</p> <p>Overall, this places RCPS in the bottom of the high range. Although the district has a record of success, it did not include college enrollment data in this proposal.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: Rockdale County Public Schools provides evidence that it currently practices transparency in processes, practices and investments. For example, personnel salaries are made available to the public through district, state, and governmental websites. Additionally, this information is available through an annual federal data collection process.  Overall, this places RCPS in the upper high range.		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: Rockdale County Public Schools clearly demonstrates evidence of autonomy under state guidelines to implement its approved grant proposal and offer public school choice. For example, the current state code gives districts the autonomy to create its own attendance zones. Similarly, the district's proposal includes a mastery based course completion plan with the creating of electronic learning portfolios. According to the state grant reviewer feedback document, the district is in compliance with state policies and regulations.  Overall, this places RCPS in the upper high range.		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	7
(B)(4) Reviewer Comments: Rockdale County Public Schools reports evidence of stakeholder involvement in the proposed plan. For example, the district developed the reform model during a five year strategic planning process. Stakeholders were included as members of the renewal team. However, it is not clear of the specific involvement of students, families, teachers and principals from all of the participating schools.  Letters of support are included from all schools. It is clear that all schools and teachers support the proposal. However, the principal of one school did not affix a signature to one support letter.  Additionally, letters of support were included from many external stakeholders such as governmental officials, business owners, postsecondary organizations, and politicians. However, at least one letter of support was mailed previously by the supporter and cannot be considered in this process.  Overall, this places RCPS in the upper middle range.		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	3
(B)(5) Reviewer Comments: Rockdale County Public Schools identifies the needs and gaps that exist in the district. The district acknowledges that needs exist in the district. For example, seat-time learning and inadequate curriculum has resulted in lower student academic performance. As a result, the district renewed its strategic plan and removed existing barriers in order to address the current needs of students.  The proposal explicitly describes the identified needs and plan for implementation, however, it is not clear how the plan addresses gaps or what specific gaps the plan attempts to address.  Overall, this places RCPS in the high middle range.		

### C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	18
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: Rockdale County Public Schools proposes a high quality plan designed to promote personalized learning through its state approved College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI). According to the application, students will participate in a comprehensive advisement system with parent and educator support. This system is structured for middle and high school students and is essential toward helping students understand what they are learning. Also, all students will engage in applied		

learning opportunities and develop an individual graduation plan that will ensure academic success.

RCPS proposes cultural diversity training for staff members in an effort to provide access and exposure to diverse cultures, contests, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual learning. Additionally, mentoring is included as part of the plan for teachers to assist them in addressing individual student needs.

However, there is no clear evidence of a plan by the district to support mastering critical academic content and developing skills and traits such as goal-setting, teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, communication, or similiar traits for students.

The district demonstrates its commitment to personalized learning with the Early Learning Initiative that promotes the support of family and education as well as through the varied parent and community engagement opportunities that are offered.

Likewise, collaborative teaching strategies, professional development, and family engagement approaches are listed by the district as adding to a high quality instructional environment.

Similarly, the district proposes the use of a virtual campus, digital textbooks, mobile devices, online professional learning, web based instructors, listserves, blogs, and blended learning as part of the high quality content proposed for students.

RCPS notes the availability of student data both in local and statewide databases with a color coding system that allows for ease of interpretation. Additionally, the district's data warehouse/staff portal will be used to complete personalized learning recommendations.

Finally, the six step Cycle for Results, ensures that accommodations and strategies for high needs students will be provided by RCPS.

Although, the district addressed many areas in this section of the proposal, no evidence of training and support for students could be identified.

Overall, the district scores in the upper high range for this area.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)

20

16

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Rockdale County Public Schools identifies a clear plan for improving teaching and learning through a personalized learning approach. For example, the district reports that school-based educators will receive adequate and ongoing professional development to implement the Personalized Framework. This includes a minimum of five full days of training as well as weekly and monthly training opportunities.

Additionally, students will have multiple opportunities for a variety of learning approaches which will help them to increase academic achievement levels. For example, students will experience digital learning resources such as textbooks and mobile devices. Staff members will learn blended learning approaches as well.

Although RCPS provides sufficient evidence in most cases, there is no evidence of educator training to provide frequent feedback to students.

The district will use the teacher and administrator evaluator system of effectiveness currently in use by the state.

RCPS staff will receive training on the RTI process as well as Cultural Competency Mentoring which will help them meet the needs of students. Additionally, advanced communications using technology will assist with building teacher capacity in the schools. Although professional development will be provided to content coaches using the Cycle for Results, it is unclear how the training will result in matching student needs with available resources.

The current Leader Key Effectiveness system includes components for leaders to provide continuous school improvement upon assessment. Likewise, the Cycle for Results provides training and a plan to increase student achievement and close achievement gaps.

Finally, the district proposes to increase certifications in rigorous core subject areas gving them a greater pool of effective teachers. For instance, RCPS will offer incentives, peer observations and scholarships to assist in this process.

Therefore, this places RCPS in the lower high range.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

Available

Score

(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	15
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Rockdale County Public Schools' infrastructure and policy are aligned to support implementation of this project. The district office cabinet makeup provides the necessary structure to adequately support its schools. For instance, staff members include representation in all areas from curriculum, technology, professional development, student services, finances, and public relations.</p> <p>Additionally, school leadership teams have the autonomy to plan for improved student achievement. Schools are given the flexibility to develop calendars, hire personnel, prepare budgets, and organize instruction.</p> <p>Likewise, students benefit from similar flexible options such as competency-based learning. Also, current RCPS students have the opportunity for automatic re-teaching of standards until mastery is obtained.</p> <p>Finally, collaborative training provided to teachers in RCPS ensures that standards-based instruction is accessible to all students.</p> <p>Overall, this places RCPS in the upper high range.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	9
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Rockdale County Public Schools demonstrates its record of support for a personalized learning environment throughout the district. For example, all students, regardless of income, have access to a classroom equipped with 21<sup>st</sup> Century technology. Likewise, the district is implementing a one to one computer initiative as well as a virtual campus.</p> <p>RCPS provides a plethora of technical support including a network technician, instructional technology specialist, data coach and help desk manager to ensure that all stakeholders have appropriate support.</p> <p>Additionally, the district has transitioned to an electronic parent portal. However, it is unclear if the data is being used with other electronic learning systems.</p> <p>Finally, RCPS has a software based data warehouse system that integrates multiple data sources for district use. However, plans include additional components to be integrated in the future.</p> <p>Overall, this places RCPS in the upper high range.</p>		

## E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	12
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Rockdale County Public Schools utilizes an internationally accredited strategic plan as a framework for continuous improvement. For example, the Cycle of Results Model used by the district is a multi-step process for providing timely and regular feedback. Likewise, the examination and analysis of student data allows the district to develop customized learning for students as well as professional development activities for staff and additional support systems. RCPS indicates that it will report to other publics but it is not clear how the district plans to publicly share information on the quality of professional development and investments under the grant.</p> <p>Overall, this places RCPS in the low high range.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

Rockdale County Public Schools offers a comprehensive approach to providing meaningful communication. For example, the RCPS has a good relationship with the local newspaper and reports daily on events in the district. Also, the district has participated on interview panels and has plans to continue this communication approach with the local television station.

RCPS provides ongoing communication by updating the district website and scheduling bimonthly advisory meetings. Also, within the district, employees receive electronic newsletters and video messages. Finally, the district uses smartphone, text, and email formats for rapid communication. All of these methods of communication suggest that RCPS clearly participates in engaging internal and external stakeholders.

Overall, this places RCPS in the upper high range.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)

5

5

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Rockdale County Public Schools shows a commitment to implementing a personalized learning environment by selecting performance measures that are ambitious and achievable. For example, ensuring that all students have a highly effective teacher and principal and meet grade span checkups. Hence, all teachers and principals must participate in the TKES and LKES effectiveness evaluation system with a 100% target by the end of a five year period.

Likewise, if students are proficient at reading by grade 3 and on statewide assessments, have adequate financial resources for college, meet standards on career certifications, have a personalized program of study, they have a greater likelihood of successfully becoming college and career ready by the end of the high school years.

Therefore, all performance measures ensure success towards continuous improvement.

Based on the district's proposed plan and cycle of continuous improvement, it is highly likely that the district will achieve these performance measures.

Overall, RCPS scores in the upper high range.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)

5

5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Rockdale County Public Schools' multi- faceted approach to evaluating the effectiveness of its high quality plan involves continuous feedback. For example, the district will monitor attendance at professional development sessions as well as dissemination in the classroom. In addition, a research design model will be used to compare the district with other districts on measuring the effectiveness of all of the components of the PLACES model. Both quarterly and annual reports will serve as avenues for the district to make necessary revisions.

Overall, RCPS scores in the upper high range.

## F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	9
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
Rockdale County Public Schools provides a budget that clearly identifies all funds available and sufficient to implement the grant.		
RCPS articulates in a chart format, all funds available to support the grant project. Likewise, the approximate per pupil expenditure per year appears reasonable. However, if approved, slight arithmetic modifications should be completed during the application revision period. For example, In the overall budget summary F(1) line 9, column (e) is less than the total for rows		

1-8, column (e). Similarly, line 12, column (e) does not total line 1, columns (a-d).

Finally, funds that are available for additional support each year are clearly identified.

Overall, this places RCPS in the upper high range.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)

10

8

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Rockdale County Public Schools shares a commitment for sustainability beyond the grant period.

The district currently provides financial support for the project and will continue the support beyond the grant period. Likewise, entities such as the school board, collaborative partners, advisory boards, and local business will provide financial resources in the future. Although the district identified several potential supporters, there is no evidence of specific dollar value support per individual or entity beyond the grant period.

Overall, this places RCPS in the low high range.

## Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	9

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

Rockdale County Public Schools is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for its students. This is evident in the long term partnership that it has maintained with two organizations to provide social services and screenings for its students. For example, the STARS partnership provides social services intervention such as social, emotional, and behavioral interventions for early childhood students and teen moms. Additionally, the STARS project, through the LIPT also meets to share data and provide meaningful feedback as part of the district's high quality plan. Secondly, the Rockdale Early Learning Initiative (RELI)/Parents as Teachers (PAT) provide diagnostic and developmental screening for students. Both partnerships assist the district with addressing the personalized learning option for students.

RCPS' focus on social/emotional and educational outcomes for its students results in students being prepared for kindergarten, reading by grade 3, having a safe and supportive environment, community partnership support and a personalized learning experience.

RCPS wants to improve social/emotional behaviors and academic skills by building resiliency skills and reducing risky behaviors in students. For example, the district plans to track measured outcomes by using a three tiered approach to evaluation. Its measure of results will include process evaluation, outcome evaluation and informal feedback. Likewise, the Cycle for Results for Teaching and Learning will also be adopted to assist with improving results over time.

The district plans as a strategy, additional staff, to scale the early learning center model to other high need areas. For instance, by adding staff, RCPS will increase its capacity to serve 25% more students.

RCPS describes its continuous improvement process as a mechanism to improve results. As an example, both partners have adopted the Cycle for Results framework currently in use by the district. Data will be collected, analyzed and used by partners to develop additional strategies as necessary to improve student results over time.

The district clearly addresses all of the components in this section; however, it does not state how the partnership will address particular student needs and services. In fact, there is no response included in this section of the application to address particular student needs and services.

RCPS proposes to build capacity through the implementation of a professional development plan for staff. For example, staff members will participate in numerous training sessions designed to increase their knowledge of district wide reform but particularly in improving family and community supports.

The district identifies needs based on the PLACES model as the focus for community partnerships. First, if students are proficient at reading by grade 3 and on statewide assessments, have adequate financial resources for college, meet standards on career certifications, have a personalized program of study, they have a greater likelihood of successfully becoming college and career ready by the end of the high school years. Secondly, if they have the necessary social services and support, they will likely build resiliency skills for life.



RCPS has a decision making process in place that addresses student needs. For example, the district describes a successful practice of collaboration with partners in the planning, implementation, and evaluation process that resulted in improvement for students. Furthermore, both RELI and STARS have mutual objectives established and are expected to align their resources with the district's model for student success.

RCPS actively engages parents and families in the decision making process. For instance, advisory councils provide venues for parents, students, and families to have input into the decision making process. Additionally, the district's Cycle for Results Framework is critical for ensuring ongoing parent involvement, a successful personalized learning plan, and progress toward desired goals for students.

As part of the continuous improvement process, RCPS routinely assesses progress toward implementation. For example, both partners are involved in regular oversight and evaluation in the Cycle for Results Framework.

RCPS identifies performance measures and desired student results that appear promising and have proven successful in some instances. These measures are focused around Kindergarten readiness, reading readiness, and social, emotional and behavioral interventions. Although the measures may be ambitious, they all represent outcomes expected based on the district's commitment to success when utilizing the PLACES model for school reform.

Overall, this places RCPS in the middle high range.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:		
<p>Rockdale County Public Schools clearly articulates a comprehensive reform model that encompasses the four core academic areas. The district proposes a complete transformation of the curriculum, instruction, and schedule for students. This vision is articulated in the district's five year strategic plan. For example, RCPS identified PLACE (Personalized Learning Assures College/Career Empowerment for Students) framework serves as the foundation to accomplish the districtwide focus on customized learning. Likewise, the district's emphasis on magnet schools and academies, personalized learning portfolios, technology, college partnerships, and online learning opportunities ensures that the focus will be on the four educational core areas.</p> <p>The district demonstrates its commitment to personalized learning with the Early Learning Initiative that promotes the support of family and education. Additionally, this commitment is noted through the varied parent and community engagement opportunities that are offered.</p> <p>Likewise, collaborative teaching strategies, professional development, and family engagement approaches are listed as adding to a high quality instructional environment.</p> <p>Similarly, the district proposes the use a virtual campus, digital textbooks, mobile devices, online professional learning, web based instructors, listserves, blogs, and blended learning as part of the high quality content proposed for students.</p> <p>The district will use the teacher and administrator evaluator system of effectiveness currently in use by the state. The current Leader Key and Teacher Key Effectiveness system includes components for leaders and teachers to provide continuous school improvement upon assessment. Also, the district proposes to increase certifications in rigorous core subject areas. Finally, incentives, peer observations and scholarships will be offered to ensure the most highly effective educators are in the district.</p> <p>Overall, this places RCPS in the upper high range.</p>		

Total	210	183
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	15
<p>Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Public Safety Academy</p> <p>Rockdale County Public Schools proposes to extend the current strategic plan by offering educational experiences that enhance the personalized learning concept. The high quality plan focuses on hard to measure skill development through the Public Safety Academy, PSA.</p> <p>The objectives are reasonable, attainable, and will prepare students to become College and Career Ready. Additionally, students will develop traits in areas that are difficult to measure.</p> <p>The optional budget allows for school choice in Law and Justice or Emergency Services programs. Additionally, the optional budget proposal provides evidence of financial support from local, state, and other entities, therefore, increasing the changes of sustainability in the future. Similarly, the hardware, equipment and other resources purchased will allow for continued use in the district thus impacting a large number of students and the community.</p> <p>Finally, the PSA approach could easily be replicated in other districts across the nation.</p> <p>Overall, this places RCPS in the upper high range.</p>		
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	12
<p>Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Road Trip Nation!</p> <p>Rockdale County Public Schools proposes to extend the current strategic plan by offering educational experiences that enhance the personalized learning concept. The high quality plan focuses on hard to measure skill development through Road Trip Nation!</p> <p>The objectives are reasonable, attainable, and will prepare students to become College and Career Ready for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century work environment. Additionally, students will develop skills that are relevant to their future careers.</p> <p>The optional budget allows for school choice in Road Trip Nation! Additionally, the optional budget proposal provides evidence of limited financial support with the in-kind RV contribution. However, there is little evidence of sustainability beyond the grant period. Although only one staff person is requested through this grant, sufficient funds will be needed in the future to ensure continued success for this program in the future.</p> <p>Finally, Road Trip Nation! can easily be replicated in other districts across the nation with adequate funding.</p> <p>Overall, this places RCPS in the lower high range.</p>		
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	10
<p>Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Project Success</p> <p>Rockdale County Public Schools proposes to extend the current strategic plan by offering educational experiences that enhance the personalized learning concept. The high quality plan focuses on personalization of support strategies for students.</p> <p>The objectives are reasonable, attainable, and will increase the possibility of long term success for students after receiving social and emotional skills training.</p> <p>The optional budget allows for necessary social, emotional, and health services to high needs populations. Similarly, equipment and other resources purchased will allow for continued use in the district thus impacting a large number of students and the community. However, there is little evidence of current financial support from external providers nor evidence of sustainability beyond the grant period. This proposal requires several fulltime staff members to be funded through the grant. Therefore, sufficient funds will be needed in the future to ensure continued success for this program.</p> <p>Finally, Project Success can easily be replicated in other districts across the nation with adequate funding.</p> <p>Overall, this places RCPS in the upper middle range.</p>		



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0482GA-3 for Rockdale County Public Schools

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Rockdale County Public Schools (RCPS) has done an excellent job in presenting a vision that is very comprehensive and coherent in theory, content, program planning, budgeting and resources. Their RTT grant proposal incorporates all four core educational assurance areas to ensure equity and accelerate student achievement by developing programs that could really address individual student needs. RCPS is committed to systematic redesign and has mindfully stated the best practices, policies, supports, systems and technology necessary to rebuild the district into a student centered school system. Over the last five years the district has brought together all stakeholders to develop a strategic plan and framework that they refer to as PLACES ( Personalized Learning Assures College/Career Empowerment for Students). Since receiving the first RTT award in 2010 the State of Georgia has worked diligently to incorporate the Common Core State Standards, rigorous teacher and leader evaluation systems and longitudinal data systems to track needs and growth. RCPS is now building on the positive track record of the success it has built over the last 10 years since NCLB and following the State of Georgia's example by proposing a RTT plan that is ambitious yet achievable.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The RCPS has implemented a system wide model where all the PLACES model offers each student the opportunity to become the leaders of their unique educational journey. The eleven elementary schools, four middle schools, three traditional high schools, two alternative high schools and a 3rd-12th grade academy will all participate in the proposal. Therefore, the entire LEA will participate and collectively meet all the RTT eligibility requirements. The members represented include.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 691 participating educators</li> <li>• 15,932 students PK-12th grade</li> <li>• 10,624 students from low income families</li> <li>• all 15,932 students are considered</li> </ul> <p>Since the RCPS is a high need, minority as majority school district creating equity with in this very diverse student population is the priority. The plan to raise achievement, close gaps and show progress in all the core assurance areas will be met through a very individualized and personalized learning system. This well thought out and developed plan is ambitious yet achievable. The RCPS district has already established a significant track record of success. The programs, data systems, staff evaluation systems and student support systems create a strong foundation and structure for student success. Any questions of selection criteria that were not evident in the Vision narrative itself were described within the budget narrative section.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application proposal from RCPS is a high quality plan that includes every school in the district. The PLACES model it outlines as the framework and foundation for systematic reform includes a cutting edge approach to meet diverse individual student needs in a rapidly changing, complex world. The RCPS proposal theorizes that when students are presented a strategic, comprehensive continuum of opportunities for college and career readiness students will; have access to more</p>		

rigorous coursework, increased scores on standardized tests and be prepared for college and careers in their chosen fields. Special emphasis is put on supporting historically unrepresented groups.

The plan outlines seven key elements of student centered programs that put students first by honoring their individual learning styles, encouraging their strengths and interests and meeting the needs of any of their learning challenges. Some examples of these key elements are;

- Flexible learning any time, any place. The district is a boundary free system where students may attend the school that meets their individualized learning needs by offering Student services that include tutoring, guidance and health services; Teacher services such as professional development, lesson and tool sharing, School services; such as implementation support, new school development and school improvement; Back office services such as enrollment, finance and facilities. The emphasis being that no existing educational barriers will be allowed to limit the educational opportunities available to their students.
- Redefinition of teacher roles which include ongoing professional development opportunities for the highly qualified teaching skills they will need to provide this unique individualized learning instruction. Online professional development, professional learning communities, instructional coaches and collaborative planning time are a vital part of the PLACES model.
- Project Based Learning- students will be able to interact with professionals in their selected career areas to help them understand the skill base they will need to develop in school to be prepared for their futures.
- Student designed and driven learning paths-Beginning in 6th grade students along with their parents and advisors will create a Map of Your Future to plan out the courses they will need to take and the continual self assessment they will need to conduct to prepare them for their career and college options.
- Mastery/competency based progression and options for demonstrating learning/assessment- the district uses standards based assessment at all grade levels.
- PK-12 continuum of learning through broad programs of study are in place. These programs are offered through school choice and specialty schools that provide individualized, personalized programs to help student's evolve.
- Real time and robust use of technology-The RCPS district is committed to fully implement digital devices and services throughout the district. the goal is to build a data warehouse to automate access to information and interaction between teachers, students and parents.

These elements are ambitious, yet achievable due to the excellent programing options being offered to students and staff.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	9
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The district has a strong track record of steady continuous improvement over the last 10 years which meets or exceeds all ESEA targets. Their reliable track record, the PLACES model and the individualizing of student programming they have in place make this a strong achievable proposal. The district plans on a 20% achievement in individual student growth by the end of the grant and to narrow student achievement gaps by 5% each year of the grant. The high school graduation rate is targeted to be above 80% and college enrollment to increase over 10% making the enrollment at 60% which is very ambitious yet achievable with the support of the PLACES model and personalized learning plans.

## B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	14

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The RDPS has aggressively followed a course of action to Defy the Norm in the Midst of Growth and Major Demographic Change. Between 2001 and 2012 there has been a drastic economic demographic change in the district. Going from 27% economically disadvantaged to 65% economically disadvantaged in 11 years. In addition the district was not making AYP under NCLB. So new leadership was put into place and a five year district wide strategic plan was developed, implemented and carefully monitored. Within the first two years RCPS was removed from the "Needs Improvement" list and has now had 6 years where they have significantly closed the closed the gaps across all subgroups. To have made such enormous improvement in student achievement shows the high quality, rigor and fidelity of the strategic plan.

- K-8th grade test scores on the state's CRCT has increased across all core subject areas.
- ELA student performance is above 90% proficient in grades 3-8 and above state performance in every grade level.

Math proficiency rates are also exceeding state proficiency as well as science and social studies proficiency rates across grade levels 3-8.

- In spite of the huge increase in economically disadvantaged students all sub group performance has increased and gaps have narrowed significantly.
- High school graduation rates have improved to the point that in the 2010-2011 school year graduation rate reached 86%, with a drop out rate of only 2.9%.
- Data was available to all stakeholders through a data based warehouse system (Tetra Data and School Net).
- The RCPS (Cycle for Results) accountability system guided customized instruction and interventions necessary to continue to build and improve capacity towards Career and College Readiness for all students.

The data results from the RCPS Strategic Plan show the profound effectiveness of the reforms they put into place to have shown such drastic improvement in student achievement in a short period of time. It is encouraging to read these impressive proficiency gains and to hear the flexible, creative programs and attention to individual learning that was constructed and supported to promote these gains. It would have been interesting to note in this section the number of students that had gone on to college.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

There is a high level of expenditure transparency in the RCPS grant proposal. The district has procedures in place that make sure all LEA processes, practices and investments are transparent and carefully accounted for. All salaries for instructional and support staff are posted on the RCPS website. Further information is available on the TeachGeorgia website as well as through the Governor's Office of School Achievement. All citizens and stakeholders can access salary information by name from the Open Georgia (Transparency in Government) website. Also, RCPS participates annually in the Department of Education's Civil Right Data Collection program to ensure access and equity for all students. All school level and district level budgets are available on the district website. The district shows that it realizes the importance of fiscal responsibility and transparency by having a variety of ways for the public to access the financial records of the RCPS. The goals that have been set are realistic and achievable.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Georgia State law encourages personalized learning environments by allowing districts the autonomy to organize and/or reorganize as the district sees necessary to meet student needs for career and college readiness. Thus the state law supports the RCPS district in allowing school choice and grants authority for districts to create and authorize their own charter schools or charter systems. RCPS grant proposal is in alignment with the state graduation rule that requires districts to have an individualized graduation plan for each student. The district takes account for this alignment in the PLACES model which creates four possible programs of study beginning in elementary school to prepare students for graduation. The grant proposal framework also is supported by a renewed strategic plan that was developed by a variety of pertinent stakeholders. The district demonstrates successful implementation of the autonomy granted in Georgia State law with the variety of charter and alternative programs it already has in place.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	8
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The grant proposal works within a five year cycle of renewal that reflects specific strategies and action steps to build the strategic plan to keep up with student and community needs. There is a steering committee where all stakeholders are represented.

Such stakeholders being-

- Students, parents, educators, school board members, business partners, faith based community members and other community partners.
- The PLACES Model is a direct reflection of the system's strategic plan.
- Stakeholder teams conducted extensive research to develop specific goals and action steps to establish personalization of learning experiences and opportunities at every level.
- Highly innovative visions for teaching and learning were developed.
- The proposal was brought before the community by the Superintendent and his cabinet.

Since Georgia is a Right to Work state without collective bargaining representation all the participating schools had to show a minimum of 70% support of teachers in writing by the building principal. Letters of support were also provided by community partners and a variety of external stakeholders. The RCPS community evidenced strong support for the school reform mandates that are ambitious yet achievable as evidenced in the district's present levels of student readiness for career and college opportunities. However, it would be important to know exactly where parents fit in this process and how they would be kept notified.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)

5

4

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The district is committed to break down barriers and boundaries that have hindered success for all students in the past model of tradition schools. The district recognizes that the expectations of what students need to know have grown. They also state that the elementary schools need a stronger fine arts component and have initiated an International Baccalaureate Program at one school site. The current proposal expands options and offers tremendous opportunities through a combination of 19 different strategies for curriculum and instruction that have increased student achievement. These strategies offer students a strong knowledge and skill base to be successful in the 21st century ever changing world. For this proposal it would have been beneficial to expand on these 19 strategies or consider eliminating or redefining some of them to express clearly how they planned on addressing current needs and gaps in student growth.

### C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	18
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>RCPS has outlined in detail in the RTT proposal a strong strategic plan to meet individual student needs through personalized education programs for every student. Included in the plan are strands of professional development and continuance of high quality curriculum and instruction. Rigorous courses of study will be planned out and monitored by qualified advisement teams to meet each student's learning and curricular needs. The State of Georgia has developed an accountability system the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) that has allowed them a waiver from the USDOE to pursue of course of action for student success through school reform that is realistic and relevant in their State. Where their districts are compelled to develop educational systems that will prepare students for career and college readiness and provide them with a rich variety of skills they will need to be successful in their lifetimes. The state has developed an index that supports the core principles that are impacting all Georgia students. These principles include-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• exemplary student achievement</li> <li>• effective teaching and learning</li> <li>• innovative school improvements and school choice options</li> <li>• a reporting system that is data driven, accountable and effective</li> </ul> <p>The RCPS has a ambitious yet achievable plan for student success that reflects a strong commitment to Career and College readiness for all students and will keep the differentiated interventions in place to continue to meet the needs of low performing schools through personalized program environments. However, more specific details need to be communicated in the proposal to be clear who is going to be responsible for the accountability of all the above principles as they are put into practice.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	20
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The RCPS district recognizes that the role of the teacher must change to meet the student centered approach to personalized learning. The grant goes into detail in this section describing what the delivery and support systems will look like and through the PLACES model plans to have on going professional development and training for teachers as they shift from a teacher directed model of teaching to that of facilitating their student's learning. To support this change the teachers will be given 5 school days a year dedicated to professional learning. They will work as professional learning community teams meeting weekly to plan, evaluate data and support one another. The district will hold monthly meetings that will offer training on developing personalized learning environments. They will collaborate will local colleges in the high schools during the school</p>		

day. Through these partnerships they will learn to prepare students to be career and college ready. Virtual professional learning systems and a extensive virtual library will be used effectively so educators can have easy access to professional development and not have to take time away from school. Instructional Coaches and mentors will be available to support professional development on site and to encourage the professional learning communities to work together and learn from one another. The district is prepared to take ownership and offer job embedded and sustainable on going professional development and training for the teachers and other stakeholders to make sure the new approach to personalized learning will be successful. Exposure to global partnerships will be a priority and a committee will be in place to focus on the research that follows what skills students will need to be successful in a global society. Resource centers will be established where parents can access the information they need to support personalized learning plans. Digital learning will be an essential component K-12 in delivering instruction. Training will be given to students and staff on how to use digital learning effectively.

To guide and evaluate the progress of the PLACES model the RCPS district will engage the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System developed by the Georgia State Department of Education. Teachers and administrators will be guided by this evaluation system that offers them meaningful feedback and support to continuously improve teacher performance and in doing so support student success. From the superintendent on down stakeholders will be supported, directed and encouraged by training, mentoring and modeling working together to make sure every student will have the safety nets, resources, data and high quality instruction necessary to show individual growth and be college and career ready. This plan is detailed and well articulated making it ambitious yet very achievable with the strong organization and support systems that are in place.

#### D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	15
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: The RCPS has best practices, policies and rules in place that facilitate the PLACES educational model. A major strength of this initiative is that the entire district is doing it together. The district office provides support so the personalized learning initiatives can be offered and delivered to each student. They are also committed to the vision of the model and enable the school sites the support necessary to implement the vision each day. The district office runs a tight lean staff so that the majority of funds can go directly to school sites, students and teachers. This allows them to use funding wisely and provide a wide range of services and programs to their teachers students and stakeholders. The money the district has invested in uploading a comprehensive easily accessible data accountability system will provide a strong foundation for reporting and monitoring student and fiscal data. Students will have personalized educational environments that are supported and supervised by their teachers, parents, advisors and the student's themselves will play a major role in taking responsibility for their learning and preparedness for future careers and college opportunities. All students are included in the same excellent individualized learning systems. Students with special needs and English language learners will be held to the same high expectations and interventions will be put into place to give them the individual support they deserve. The practical efficient structure of the school district from the district office out to the individual schools makes this plan ambitious yet achievable.		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	10
(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: The RCPS district has intentionally invested a great deal of funding into technology and currently every classroom in the district is considered a 21st Century Classroom. Each of these classrooms has a digital camera, digital overhead projector, student clickers or voters and an interactive board that is connected to the internet. In addition all classrooms have interactive software, Promethean in the elementary school and eInstruction in the secondary schools. Each school has multiple computer labs and each classroom has at least 3-5 student computers. The teachers each have their own wireless laptops and all school have wireless as well as wired networking. This networking is supported by a huge network fiber optic backbone to support technology use across the district. So the infrastructure is strong and capable and upgrading is continuous. The PLACES model recognizes that fully implementing the use of personal digital devices,content and services is essential for the effective implementation of personalized learning environment across all grade levels. Stakeholders have various ways to access district information. Schools have computer labs that are open before and after school hours where students, parents and any community members can access school information and data. The district also provides wireless availability at a free downtown wireless hot spot for the public to use and many local businesses provide free wireless access. The district is also working with the city and community groups to get low cost internet access to citizens. The district has multiple strategies in place for all stakeholders to have access to technology and technical support.		

## E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	13
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>This section is illustrative of continuous improvement, because the RCPS has shown so much success in continuous student growth. The RCPS Strategic Plan is designed through the Cycle of Results for teaching and learning initiatives to constantly monitor and report out current data and results. The Cycle of Results goals are to increase student achievement, close achievement gaps for all sub groups and create the personalized learning environment necessary for each individual student to be successful and prepared for career and college readiness as well as further secondary learning opportunities. The Cycle of Results incorporates a Six Step Study System to evaluate results. Again, the RCPS has shown enormous forethought in the establishment of effective state of the art technology programming. Programming that will ensure increased student achievement, raise graduation rates, increase career and college readiness by continuous collection of longitudinal data based monitoring and reporting. These goal are ambitious yet very achievable and have already proven very effective. The important area of stakeholders that needed to be addressed here is the parents and how they would be kept informed and data made easily accessible to them in case they did not have internet access.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The RCPS has in place strong meaningful strategies to ensure ongoing communication with all stakeholders. The district has built a technical infrastructure to support high quality instruction, linking data systems and data services where student data can be tracked longitudinally to improve student achievement and continuous improvement. This goal of continuous improvement will be shared by a variety of venues for ongoing communication and engagement of all stakeholders through-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media relations</li> <li>• Superintendent's Advisory Council District Website and eBoard</li> <li>• Parent Advisory groups at individual schools and district wide</li> <li>• Partners in Education Groups to work with local business and faith based organizations</li> <li>• Internal Communication</li> <li>• Rapid communication with Parents, Staff</li> <li>• Student Voice</li> </ul> <p>The district has established a Parent Academy and the Rockdale Youth Leadership Council. These groups will communicate and monitor continued additional ways to keep students engaged and give them the tools they need to lead the community in the future.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The performance measures proposed are high and ambitious yet very achievable as prior district data has proven. The district provided many pages of detailed charts showing how the performance measures were met and how students had shown growth. The Rockdale district has a high quality learning plan in place to ensure continuous high achieving student achievement goals through personalized learning environments for all students. The district has served as a state leader for many pilot programs and initiatives that have resulted in student success, greater teacher effectiveness, and prudent data accountability both in achievement and fiscally. The RCPS describes their strategic plan as a work in progress. Realizing that to continue to meet student needs and provide the programs necessary for students to be prepared for college and career readiness the district is going to need to continue to build capacity at each school site to assure sustainability. Teacher and administrators are given the ongoing training and support they need to teach in and lead effective schools. The district has a evaluation system in place for all teachers and administrators. Students receive timely and continuous support by qualified educators delivering high quality curriculum and instruction that is data driven and monitored. Students across the district each have an individual program of study that is developed just for them and supported by teachers, advisors and parents. Each student also has an academic portfolio that showcases and tracks their goals and a course of study to support those goals. Students are prepared throughout their school careers with the study, test taking, communication and social and emotional skills they will need to be career and college ready. All of these strategies working together will support the strategic plan and tracking the personalized learning plans for all students.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5



(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The RCPS district is extremely mindful in the importance of sustainability for continuous improvement. They will use their RTT funds prudently by using award money to upload the district with the effective technology hardware, software and services necessary to sustain their vision of personalized learning environments for every student. The foundation of technology they have established will allow them the capacity to build on and make changes as needed over time to meet individual student needs and prepare them for future success. There will be an outside evaluator contracted to over see the entire strategic plan who will send out quarterly and annual reports to the Project Manager. Evaluation systems for staff will be a driving force to guide of the success of the project. Regular scheduled reports will be sent out to all stakeholders and a rapid communication system for staff, parents and students will be in place. The structure of the RCPS school community stakeholder support and services is powerful and all participants have access to the data that drives the vision to keep this district moving forward at a rapid pace into the 21st Century. Their goals are ambitious and achievable.

## F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The personalized learning model is being implemented, delivered and monitored with rigor and fidelity across the entire RCPS district. This comprehensive district buy in from the district office to each school site is essential for the continuous improvement of the proposal and for investments to be used most effectively. The district has provided an extremely detailed breakdown of budget narrative of needs and expenditures. It is evident in how comprehensive the budget is written and itemized according to grant guidelines that the district has a clear picture of how to use their funding very efficiently. The district has articulated in a very clear and specific breakdown of costs that the budget they are proposing is reasonable and will be sufficient to cover all costs. The budget goals are ambitious yet achievable.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	10
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The RCPS will use the operational budget of the district to sustain this grant. The grant monies will be used to purchase the technology and resources to provide the tools necessary to provision and equip these innovative programs to facilitate personalized learning environments. The district has formed collaborative partnerships that will effectively support the plan over time. The RCPS intends to provide in kind funds that will cover operational costs along with local business and social service agency support will sustain the structure and good work of the proposal over time. The district's advisory board is committed to strengthen the program's finance and resource capacity to continue to be able to meet individual children's needs. They articulate that the grant would be seed money and that the district is prepared and has local support to sustain the plan.</p>		

## Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	10
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The RCPS has structures in place that provide communication, open dialog and sharing of all district data with state and local governments and all data is available on various district and state department of education websites for the public to view. This transparency is evidence of the RCPS commitment to making personalized learning environments a reality for their students. The strength of the community support and strong partnerships behind the RCPS is evident in the twenty letters of support and commitment from their local, state and business partners. The district is realistic and mindful in realizing how important collaborative community partners are to student growth and success. They reach out to local government and businesses and faith based organizations meeting and sharing data with these groups. The partnerships the district share with STARS and RELI are substantial examples of two specific partnerships that contribute directly to the success of the districts strategic plan for each child to have success. The STARS program shares data with the district and offers extended social/emotional/behavioral support to at risk students. The RELI program offers parent support and helps the district with screenings and diagnostic testing. Both of these agencies offer valuable assistance and programs to support RCPS plan for</p>		

successful personalized learning environments. The Cycle of Results Data will be used to monitor the needs and services these partners can share to support the district in improving student achievement. Parent advisory boards will also be involved and kept informed on the Cycle of Results data. The district recognizes that it will take the support of all these key players to make the ambitious yet achievable plan for developing high quality personalized learning environments a reality.

## Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

### Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The Rockdale County Public School District has done an exemplary job in the proposal it is making for continued RTT grant award support. It coherently and comprehensively has established a structure of reform that provides a personalized learning environment for every student in the district. The programming and accountability begins PreK and goes through high school. Systems of reform that are reported and monitored in a comprehensive data base that all stakeholders can access. The importance of meeting individual student needs through specifically tailored programs, high quality instruction, curriculum and assessments are addressed throughout every section of the grant proposal.

Total	210	200
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## Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	15

### Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

The RCPS district has requested additional funding for innovative programs that will facilitate at risk students in gaining the skills necessary for career and college readiness. The district already has a public safety academy program, however with grant funding it has a vision to equip and expand the program. The academy offers students emergency first aid training as well as police and fire fighting skills. The background and skills taught would give students excellent career training while they are still in high school. The academy also teaches how our judicial system works which is valuable for all citizens to have as background knowledge and a good understanding of this system.

A Public Safety Academy asking \$ 2,345,634.99 and would serve at risk students and benefit all students interested with important life and career skills.

Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	12
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### Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

The second proposed program is- Project Roadtrip Nation- this exciting alternative program would offer high school students the opportunity to travel and visit places, people and professions that they may not have available in their own community. They would document and showcase this experience by making a video along the journey. To sustain this program would be costly as far as the price of fuel, maintenance and the teacher salary.

Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	0
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### Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

Project Success is the third Optional Budget Supplement Proposal included-

The same services they are asking funding for could be met by existing county and community service providers. The program needs described in Project Success can be met by the collaborative community stakeholders that are already in collaboration with the district without adding another program for the district to manage.

